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62. A family's *padi* pun may never be sold or given away, and to it there are attached a series of ritual prohibitions, or *pemali*. In many cases, for example, it is taboo to enter a farm after having previously (i.e. on the same day) touched or eaten pork. To break such a *pemali* is to offend the *padi* spirits, and run the risk of their being frightened away; offenders are heavily penalized, the fine exacted from them laid at the foot of the growing *padi*, a cock sacrificed in expiation, and prayers of atonement uttered. These *pemali* apply to all the members of a long-house and to strangers as well; ignorance of their nature affords no excuse, and, although transgression may have been entirely inadvertent, the penalties still operate. Every *bilek* family has its own particular set of prohibitions; often they may be ten or more in number, and there is wide variation from family to family. In carrying out my field research it was always necessary to ascertain well in advance the *pemali* of any farm which I proposed visiting, and then to modify my diet and behaviour in the manner required.

63. I was made aware of the extraordinary strength of Iban belief in their *padi* cult a few months after my arrival in the Sut. I had brought with me the equipment necessary to carry out a simple plane-table survey, so that accurate measurements of farm land could be obtained. In the course of a discussion with a specially arranged meeting of senior members of the long-house, I put forward my research proposals. In general they were acceded to with alacrity (and throughout the whole of my period of research I was accorded remarkable co-operation and helpfulness), but to the suggestion that I should survey farm land, there was immediate and hostile opposition. It was said that once before a survey party had visited the Baleh, and that in ensuing years, there had been disastrously bad harvests; the *padi* spirits, disturbed by the brusque ways of the surveyors, had taken offence and fled. From the emotion which accompanied its expression, it was clear that this was a fervently held opinion, but accurate survey was an important part of my work and I had gone to considerable trouble in bringing equipment all the way from England; I at once set about doing all I could to combat the idea that it was harmful. I employed arguments of many kinds. My research, I said, was aimed at helping the Iban, at finding ways to improve their crops; in other parts of Sarawak most bountiful harvests had followed extensive surveying; they were mistaken in thinking that the *padi* spirits, who belonged to the Iban, could take offence at the actions of a European, whose *adat* was entirely different, but I would be glad to perform sacrificial rites before embarking on my work, and I would observe all other *pemali* with scrupulous care. But my audience was adamant. By this time the discussion had been going on for about two hours, and realizing that further attempts at persuasion would be futile, I resorted to sterner arguments. My research, I reiterated, was intended to help the Iban, they must trust the Government; Government knew best in saying that their land should be surveyed. But this slight threat of coercion provoked a fierce reaction. His eyes flaming and his voice suffused with emotion, Nyala—the *tuai rumah*—averred that the Government could shoot them and burn down their long-houses, but they would not submit to having their *padi* farms surveyed. The others present sprang to his support, and for several minutes there was a babble of disturbed voices. If I were not to jeopardize the whole of my research, retreat was imperative; I was compelled to disavow my plans, and apologize for my effrontery.[1]

[1] It is interesting to note that Izikowitz encountered similar difficulties when doing field research among the Lamet (of French Indo-China), who practice shifting cultivation, and have a *padi* cult closely resembling that of the Iban. He describes how he attempted to map farm land, but the Lamet were very suspicious, and when he was setting up a pole to use as a measuring point in triangulation, there were loud protests that harm would result to "the

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64. On subsequent occasions I tried, by more devious methods, to persuade individual Iban to let me survey their farms—but without success. I discovered however, that it was the surveyor's chain to which most objection was taken. By using a prismatic compass and a measuring line of fine twine, I did manage to make hurried and surreptitious surveys of several farms (*umai*), but finding myself under suspicion, I was obliged to abandon even this. Finally I resorted to pacing—with as nonchalant an air as I could command—and sights taken from the shelter of friendly stumps. Despite this ban on surveying, I was permitted to visit most of the farms of Rumah Nyala whenever I chose (provided, of course, that I obeyed the various *pemali*), and when it was found that I was seriously interested in Iban methods, I was invited to many more *padi* rituals than I had time to attend. It is when the *padi* is being sown, and during the early stages of growth that ritual prohibitions are at their most stringent, and during these periods two *bilek* families would not allow me to set foot on their farms; but in these cases, the prohibition (*pemali ngendik tegalan*) also applied to most of the other members of the long-house. Later in the year these restrictions were relaxed however, so that in course of time I was able to make repeated and detailed inspections of all farms. As will be seen later, repeated visits were always necessary, first to plot the area of jungle felled, and then to mark in the actual extent of the *padi* crop. In the course of successive visits I was able to compile a series of sketch maps. In almost all cases these maps were based on a series of measurements—by pacing—of the major dimensions of a farm, and then, the sketching in of its outline and other principal features, from several different vantage points (i.e. adjacent spurs and ridges). This method was aided by the fact that the boundaries of Iban farm plots are always very plainly demarcated against the surrounding jungle from which they have been cleared. In only two instances was it possible to make more elaborate surveys, and both were clandestine operations, undertaken soon after reaping had been completed. In general then, my data on farm acreages are based on sketch maps and careful estimates, not (as I had planned) on detailed plane-table surveys. In passing it may be noted that the survey of Iban hill farms is no easy task. Very often they are situated on extremely steep slopes (i.e. 35°—40°), broken by confined and precipitous gullies and cluttered with massive accumulations of fallen timber.

65. One of my leading reasons for selecting Rumah Nyala as the centre of my research was that all of its farms could be reached directly, and on foot, from the main long-house. For the Baleh region this is an unusual state of affairs. As already explained, each *bilek* family operates as an independent unit, and commonly the farms of a long-house community are scattered up and down the banks, and tucked away in the side streams, of a section of river from three to four miles in length. More often than not the river is broken by rapids and shoals which inhibit travel unless a well-manned canoe be available, and this is very difficult to come by when the Iban are living on their farms and pre-occupied with their *padi*. The farms of Rumah Koh, in the Ulu Baleh, for example, are strung out over several miles of river, and some of them are distant five or more

owners as well as the soul of the rice." Izikowitz continued his survey, using a lance instead of a pole—the spirits (so it was said) being afraid of the point of the lance; but within a few days the owner of the land did fall ill, and Izikowitz was absolutely forbidden to continue with his mapping. (Izikowitz, "Lamet," 1951, p. 282).

A Government surveyor, by exerting sufficient pressure, might possibly get his way, but an anthropologist could not afford to do this, for the success of his work depends on the maintenance of goodwill among the people he is living with and studying.

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Table 19: Area Farmed Annually by Family of Five Persons under System of Shifting Cultivation of Hill Rice; Comparative Data for South-East Asia

Reference[1]	*Region*	*Size of Family*	*Average Annual Acreage*
(*a*) Leach	Burma	5	2½—3 acres
(*b*) Izikowitz	French Indo-China ..	5	3½ acres
(*c*) Pelzer	East Indies	5	2·47 acres
(*d*) Geddes	Sarawak (Land Dayaks)		3½ acres
(*e*) Freeman	Sarawak (Iban) ..	5	4 acres

213. An Iban farmer does not, of course, have any method of calculating the area of his farm. What he does know, from experience, is the rough extent of the land with which his *bilek* family can cope in any particular year. The crucial limiting factor, in most cases, is the area which the available labour force of the family can effectively weed. This, as we have seen, is about two acres per worker, under ordinary conditions. Very often a *bilek* family is in a position to increase the felled area of a farm (particularly when secondary jungle is being worked), but there is no point in going beyond the area which can be effectively cultivated. If this is done the family concerned is wasting its reserves of secondary jungle, and unnecessarily shortening the duration of its grand cycle of cultivation. In general however, there does seem to be an overall tendency to fell a slightly larger area than the family can comfortably cultivate. The Iban farmer is always praying and planning for a surplus, and with this end in view he usually makes his farm ambitiously large. This is also a policy of assurance against adverse conditions, for if a poor burn is encountered and part of the farm has to be abandoned, there will still be enough left to produce minimum requirements—or so the farmer hopes.

Yields

214. We now come to the problem of yields. What sort of crops do Iban families obtain from their clearings in the jungle? Collecting data on this subject was far from easy. It had been my intention to establish test plots on as many farms as possible, and collect a detailed series of measurements; but when I put this proposal forward, strong objections were raised, just as they had been against the surveying of farm land. The *padi* spirits (*antu padi*), the Iban claimed, would be deeply offended at such treatment; there was a danger indeed, that they might flee the farms and cause disastrously poor crops in subsequent years. So deeply

[1]References:

(*a*) Leach, E. R., "The Advancement of Science," Vol. VI, No. 21, p. 27 seq.: "Some Aspects of Dry Rice Cultivation in North Burma and British Borneo."

(*b*) Izikowitz, K. G. "Lamet: Hill Peasants in French Indo-China," 1951, p. 285.

(*c*) Pelzer, K. J., "Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics," 1945, p. 24. (This estimate is based on the findings of the Dutch authority—Van Beukering).

(*d*) Geddes, W., New Zealand Geographical Society Record, No. 12, 1951, p. 7.

(*e*) This estimate is based on my average of 0·8 acre felled per annum per head of population; if allowance is made for land cleared but not brought into cultivation, a reduction is necessary. At Rumah Nyala in 1949-50, for example, the average area *under padi* per five persons was only 3·1 acres.

(cf. also, Allsop, F., "Shifting Cultivation in Burma," Proceedings of the Seventh Pacific Science Congress, vol. VI, 1953, p. 283: "It has been found that an average of two to three acres per family is as much as can be efficiently worked and is sufficient to provide ample supplies of food-crops if properly tended.").

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rooted were these objections that I was obliged to abandon my plans, for to persist would have been to lose the goodwill of my helpers and informants. In one instance however, I did persevere. For several months I used every persuasion I could devise, holding out greater and greater offers of recompense, until one man, whose farm I had selected for an intensive study of the ritual of *padi* cultivation, submitted to my pleadings. He agreed to let me measure a chosen plot of his *padi* on the last day of the harvest. After several set-backs—for other members of his family were opposed to the idea—I succeeded in measuring the yield of a test patch: 22 ft. × 11 ft. or 1/180th of an acre in area.

215. Many families also refused, for ritual reasons, to let me measure the contents of their *padi* bins—even after the grain had been stored away. However I did manage to take detailed measurements of the holdings of four *bilek* families, and to obtain approximate estimates—either by inspection or from testimony—for all the other households of the long-house. As already explained the Iban store their *padi* in large bark-bins. These bins are cylindrical in shape, and as the grain is packed down very tightly it is possible to calculate their contents with reasonable accuracy. It is also necessary however, to keep a careful check on the domestic arrangements of the families concerned, for often an appreciable proportion of the new crop is consumed before storage takes place.

216. Let us begin with a discussion of the results obtained from my solitary test plot. The farm on which it was situated had been cut from *dijap krukoh kampong*—that is, virgin jungle first felled in 1944, had been farmed again in 1945, and then allowed to lie fallow for three years before being cleared and cultivated for a third time in 1949. According to the Iban with whom I discussed the matter it was land of good average quality, and this was also my impression. On April 24th, 1950 only a small area of good quality *padi sangking* remained to be reaped; I selected a typical section, measured out a plot 22 ft. × 11 ft., and marked its boundaries with wooden stakes. It was then harvested under my supervision; two women took part, and the task kept them occupied for just on 28 minutes. They handed over to me all the *padi* they had reaped, and I carried it back to be threshed and winnowed that same morning. From the first threshing (which took 6½ minutes) 16·4 pints of grain were obtained; and from a second threshing (taking 3½ minutes) 0·7 of a pint; there was thus a total of 17·1 pints. (All measurements were by capacity). The grain obtained by threshing was then winnowed by hand (i.e. in a *chapan*), and this resulted in the rejection of 1·85 pints (i.e. husks without kernels), or a loss of 10·8%, by capacity. There remained 15·25 pints.

217. This considerable reduction in quantity following winnowing deserves special comment, for it is a phenomenon which greatly concerns the Iban. As the harvest progresses each *bilek* family stores its threshed *padi* on the *ruai* (public gallery) of the *dampa* or long-house, until the day arrives when the whole crop is winnowed. Neighbouring families take particular interest in comparing the crop before and after winnowing. If a considerable reduction in quantity is detected, this is taken as an indication that the charms and magico-religious rites of the family concerned have not been fully effective. A similar comparison is often made before and after threshing. On several occasions my attention was privately drawn to large reductions: "How very much Kamba's *padi* has gone down after threshing" ("*Padi Kamba udu surut udah nungko*"); and I was told that the differential behaviour of *padi* during threshing and winnowing was evidence for the existence of the *padi* spirits which clung more to some families than to others.

11:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

chanced to visit a number of the more distant Iban communities of the Third Division where earthenware pots were still being made and used. The main purpose of this present paper is to give an account of the technique of pottery making as my wife and I observed it in an Iban long-house in the head-waters of the Mujong River of the Kapit District.[4]

Early in November, 1949, so that we might witness a set of major rituals (the chief of which were several *gawai kenyalang*, or hornbill rituals) we had travelled to Rumah Tungku (a long-house of 50 apartments) in the lower reaches of the Sungai Tiau, a stream that rises among the grotesque granite peaks of the Hose Mountains and flows away to the south-west to become one of the main tributaries of the Mujong. Soon after our arrival, while making a census of the families of Rumah Tungku, we noticed that many of the apartments contained stocks of earthenware pots. Blackened by soot, they stood in racks above the elevated cooking hearth (*dapur*) of the apartment, or hung in rotan casings from the hearth's side-posts. When we asked about them we were told that all the pots we had seen had been made by women of Rumah Tungku from local clays and by traditional Iban methods. In several parts of the Baleh region we had come across other long-houses where pots of Iban make were being used, but nowhere had we seen as many *priok tanah* as at Rumah Tungku.

Clearly pottery making was a flourishing local industry, and we resolved to find out what we could about it as soon as the *gawai* we had come to observe and study were at an end.

By Friday, 25th November, even the most elaborate of the *gawai* had been over for several days. Life in the long-house was gradually returning to normal and routine domestic tasks that had been pushed to one side because of preoccupation with ritual matters of high importance were slowly being taken up again. So it was that on the morning of that Friday we came across old Runin, seated on a mat at the edge of her section of the great gallery (*ruai*) of the long-house, making a clay pot. Here was the opportunity we had been hoping for: we sat down beside her and watched.

During the previous weeks we had seen a good deal of Runin. She was a charming old lady, full of good humour, and possessing an expert knowledge of the part Iban women play in *gawai*

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rituals—which was how we had come to know her. When we told her that we would very much like to learn something about the Iban way of making earthenware pots she said she would be glad to help us, and she agreed that the next day we should follow the making of a pot from the gathering of the clay onwards.

In 1949, Runin was a widow of about 65 years. She had been born in a long-house of the Sungai Ngemah, to which river her ancestors had migrated from the headwaters of the Batang Ai, and she had been living in the Sungai Tiau since about 1923, a year after the Baleh region was re-opened to settlement following the quelling of Iban rebels in the Rejang, the Mujong and the Gat.[5] At 65, Runin stood at the head of a *bilek* family of seven members. Her greatest delight in life was Tukang, aged 3, her grandson.[6] Tukang was the son of Demai (aged 25 years) the daughter of Runin's deceased sister Payah, and Demai it was who was deputed by Runin to go, the next day, and collect the clay for the making of further pots. Demai called in, as a helper, Inyan, aged 14 years, the granddaughter of Runin's sister-in-law, Irin, who lived in a neighbouring apartment of the long-house.

Soon after ten o'clock the next morning (26th November, 1949), Demai and Inyan came to tell us that they were ready to go and dig for clay. They had with them two long-bladed knives (*duku*) and two circular baskets (*lekit*) lined with freshly plucked banana leaves (*daun pisang*). The spot where Demai hoped to find suitable clay was on the western bank of the Tiau River just opposite the long-house. Other women of the long-house, she said, had made pots with clay from this source, but never Runin, who usually obtained her supplies from deposits further inland, now cut off by the flooded river.

Because the Tiau was in flood we had to make the crossing to the western bank by canoe (*prau*). Within a few minutes Demai had located a narrow seam of clay just above the level of the swollen river. After testing a piece of the clay by pressing it between her fingers she announced that it would do, and after an admonitary word to Inyan and ourselves she commenced to dig. (Plate 1).*

Her admonition was a strange one. Before setting out from the long-house Demai had solemnly warned us of a taboo (*pemali*)

*Plate numbers referred to by Dr. Freeman are cross-indexed to S.M.J. sequence at p.174, q.v.

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Sea Dayak Diet: A Longhouse Survey

by

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During the last two and a half years I have carried out several tours of Sea Dayak areas in the Second Division visiting three or four houses each day. It was soon realised that such tours furnished only very superficial information regarding the general level of health and nutrition of these people and the prevalence of disease from which they suffer. The present study was undertaken to enquire into these questions more closely.

Rumah Bujak at Nanga Pruan was chosen for the study. The reasons for this were its proximity to Simanggang and the fact that this house is fortunate in having a very active, enterprising headman so that willing co-operation from the people of the longhouse was to be expected throughout the period of study.

From the 2nd February to the 29th November, 1958, the longhouse was visited every Saturday or Sunday by a team usually comprising the Divisional Medical Officer, a hospital assistant, laboratory technician, one or more hospital attendants and one or more trained *ulu* dressers. Sick people were examined each week, either treated on the spot or sent to Simanggang for outpatient or inpatient treatment as indicated. In addition the investigations to be described below were carried out during these weekly visits.

Rumah Bujak, Pruan

Before presenting the results of the study a brief description will be given of the longhouse and the way of life of the people who live in it.

The people of Rumah Bujak come originally from Sungai Pinggai on the Undup River. The Undup is a moderately large left branch of the Batang Lupar, the mouth of which is about twenty minutes' journey by outboard upriver from Simanggang. Sungai Pinggai is a further three hours' journey up the Undup by outboard.

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Rumah Bujak

a surplus which they sell to the bazaar. The padi is planted in July and August and harvested in February and March. They grow vegetables and fruit around the house and along the bunds between the padi fields, partly for their own consumption and partly to sell in the bazaar. They rear pigs and poultry and own five head of cattle comprising one bull and four cows.

When not employed in padi cultivation and jobs about the longhouse the people spend a large portion of each year at Sungai Pinggai tapping rubber. While so employed they live in their rubber gardens for days or weeks at a time.

Social Pattern

The situation at Rumah Bujak, where the people live part of the year in the longhouse and part of the year in *langkaus* a considerable distance from the longhouse, travelling between the two places as required is the rule rather than the exception in the Second Division. For example many Sea Dayaks in the Saribas and Rimbas Rivers have their longhouses upriver and swamp padi fields downriver, travelling between the two as required.

In short the Sea Dayak in the Second Division at least is semi-nomadic. This factor would assume great importance if medical surveys or the attack on specific diseases by mass drug administration were being planned, where it is necessary to have as near one hundred per cent of the population as possible in the longhouse at the same time. If a wide area were being covered by such a campaign, no particular season of the year would be ideal for all parts of the area in which the campaigning was being carried out.

The Sea Dayak is understandably reluctant to curtail his movements to and fro, as they have usually an agricultural motive and on agriculture his main source of livelihood depends. The only answer to this problem would be intensive propaganda before a medical campaign enlisting the enthusiastic help of the administrative authorities.

This problem of continuous migration kept cropping up throughout the present study. It made investigations more laborious and time-consuming than they would otherwise have been.

pass their school examinations, and take care of the parents in their old age.

No person is blessed with good luck continually, and the concept of bad luck serves to rationalize failures, the inability to cope with certain situations, and to save face. Although Manang Biga' of Rumah Gaong Ieft his farm after planting and went on a shamanic tour of the Oya River area, the failure of the farm was attributed to bad luck. A childless couple may be suffering from any number of health problems including malnutrition, but their childlessness most often will be attributed to bad luck.[25] Iban children in the first grade in rural schools are already two years behind their urban counterparts, who are enrolled in kindergartens[26] by age four. Their attendance is casual and few do any study at home. Yet, recently, when I asked a teacher in a rural school about his child's results in the Common Entrance Examination, the father replied that his son had failed. "No luck" (nadai nasit), he replied, though his habits were consonant with those described above.

In a culture whose practitioners hold that "nothing happens by chance" (nadai utai nyadi ngapa'), causal explanations are sought for

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[25] In several longhouses where occupants discovered through conversation that our children were in order son-daughter-son, they were convinced that we had some kind of medicine (ubat) and besought me to divide some with them.

[26] Because of the intensely competitive examination situation, primary school education has been pushed forward through the proliferation of kindergartens.